

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00925 290659Z
ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 EA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 AID-01 NSC-06
/040 W

-----001103 290702Z /10/13

P R 280935Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9537
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC HONOL HI
JCRC BARGERS PT HI

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 5 LINES 9 AND 10)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD
IAE.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP
SUBJECT: CODEL MONTGOMERY-MEETING WITH PHOUMI VONGVICHIT

SUMMARY: PHOUMI DWELT AT GREATH LENGTH ON THE DAMAGE THAT
HAD BEEN DONE TO LAOS DURING THE WAR. CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY
OFFERED U.S. ASSISTANCE IN EXPLOSIVE ORDANCE DISPOSAL
(EOD). IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, PHOUMI DESCRIBED THE
LDPR'S EDUCATIONAL PLANS. CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY SAID HE
HOPED THAT AFTER A SERIOUS EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE, THE MIA
ISSUE COULD BE PUT ASIDE. PHOUMI SPECIFICALLY LINKED
U.S. AID TO THE SEARCH FOR MIA'S. END SUMMARY.

1. THE STBSTANTIVE ELEMENT OF CODEL MONTGOMERY (EMBERS
OF CONGRESS, MR. VANCE, LT.COL. EILAND, AND MISS LARSON)
PLUS THE CHARGE MET AT 110 AUGUST 26 WITH PHOUMI
VONGVICHIT, LAO DEPTUY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF
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EDUCATION. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN ENGLISH AND
LAO WITH EACH SIDE PROVIDING AN INTERPRETER INTO ITS
OWN LANGUAGE.

2. PHOUMI OPENED BY SAYING HE WAS GLAD THE GROUP HAD
COME TO LAOS. HE SAID THAT THE LAO WANTED TO BE OF HELP
WITH THE MIA PROBLEM BUT THAT UNFORTUNATELY THEIR EFFORTS

WERE HINDERED BY THEIR MANY BITTER MEMORIES OF THE WAR. HE STRESSED THE IMMENSE TONNAGE OF BOMBS WHICH HAD BEEN DROPPED BY AMERICAN AIRCRAFT ON LAOS (3,000,000 TONS) AND THE GREAT DAMAGE THAT HAD BEEN DONE. SOME OF THIS ORDNANCE WAS STILL LYING IN THE GROUND UNEXPLODED AND WAS A DANGER TO PEOPLE WHO WISHED TO FARM OR TO CUT WOOD IN THE FORESTS. HE STRESSED THE PROBLEM OF REFUGEES WHO WANTED TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES BUT COULD NOT BECAUSE OF THE ORDNANCE IN THE GROUND.

3. CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY SAID THAT THE U.S. WOULD BE WILLING TO HELP WITH THIS PROBLEM BUT WOULD NEED A FORMAL REQUEST. THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAD MANY EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL (EOD) EXPERTS, AND PERHAPS SOME OF THE COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE. PHOUMI SAID THAT THE LAO DID NOT NEED ANY HELP IN FINDING THE ORDNANCE. THE WOULD LIKE, HOWEVER, TO HAVE THE "MOST MODERN EQUIPMENT" WHICH THEY COULD THEN USE TO DISARM THE SHELLS AND BOMBS IN THE GROUND. CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY SAID THAT THERE HAD TO BE SOME SORT OF LIAISON, HOWEVER, TO WORK OUT THE BEST WAY TO PERFORM THE NECESSARY EOD. HE POINTED OUT THAT CONGRESSMAN MOORE HAD EARLIER MENTIONED TO HIM THAT UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE FROM THE U.S. CIVIL WAR WAS STILL BEING FOUND NEAR BATTLE SITES OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THE FIGHTING WAS OVER.

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4. PHOUMI THEN LAUNCHED INTO A LENGTHLY REHASH OF THE WAR IN LAOS. HE SAID THAT 3,000,000 TONS OF BOMBS HAD BEEN DROPPED ON THE FOUR FIFTHS OF THE COUNTRY WHICH HAD BEEN "LIBERATED " BY THE PATHET LAO. GREAT DAMAGE HAD BEEN DONE. SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND REFUGEES HAD BEEN FORCED BY THE AMERICANS TO FLEE THEIR HOMES, AND NOW MANY OF THEM COULD NOT RETURN BECAUSE OF UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE IN THE GROUND.

5. CONGRESSMAN HALL ASKED WHETHER PHOUMI, SINCE HE WAS MINISTER OF EDUCATION, COULD TELL THE GROUP SOMETHING ABOUT THE LAO EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. PHOUMI SAID THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME, 40PCT OF THE CHILDREN IN LAOS WERE NOT ABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL. THE LPDR WAS TRYING TO CHANGE THIS AND BRING ABOUT A SITUATION IN WHICH THERE WOULD BE A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN EVERY VILLAGE, A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN EVERY DISTRICT, AND A COLLEGE-LEVEL INSTITUTION IN EVERY PROVINCE. PHOUMI SAID THAT THE LAO WERE RECEIVING VERY USEFUL AID FROM UNESCO AND UNICEF FOR THIS PROGRAM.

6. CONGRESSMAN DANIELSON ASKED PHOUMI WHAT WHERE

THE TYPES OF TERRAIN WHERE MOST OF THE UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE WAS LOCATED. THE QUESTION WAS EITHER MIS-TRANSLATED OR PHOUMI MISUNDERSTOOD, BECAUSE HE ANSWERED BY TELLING CONGRESSMAN DANIELSON ABOUT THE TYPES OF BOMBS WHICH WERE IN THE GROUND. HE SAID THAT THEY RANGED FROM SMALL CB AND FLECHETTE BOMBS ALL THE WAY UP TO 1,000 KILOGRAM HIGH EXPLOSIVE BOMBS. CONGRESSMAN DANIELSON DID NOT PRESS HIS ORIGINAL QUESTION.

7. CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY AGAIN MADE AN OFFER OF EOD ASSISTANCE. CONGRESSMAN DANIELSON ASKED HOW MANY PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED BY UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE SINCE THE WAR. PHOUMI SAID THAT "OVER A HUNDRED" HAD DIED.

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8. CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY TOLD PHOUMI THAT HIS GROUP UNDERSTOOD HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS TO FIND MIA'S. THE HOPED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SEARCH WOULD CONTINUE. AFTER THE EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE, CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY SAID HE FURTHER HOPED THAT MIA'S WOULD NO LONGER HAVE TO BE A TOP ISSUE IN LAO-U.S. RELATIONS. PHOUMI SAID HE HOPED SO, TOO, BUT AID FROM THE U.S. WOULD BE NECESSARY TO HELP CHANGE THE MINDS AND REMOVE THE BITTER FEELINGS OF THE LAO WHO WOULD HAVE TO DO THE SEARCHING.

9. THE MEETING ENDED WITH CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY AND THE CHARGE GIVING PHOUMI THE BEST WISHES OF FORMER UNDER SECRETARY HABIB.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING REPORTS, BOMB DAMAGE, FOREIGN ASSISTANCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VIENTI00925
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780354-0607, D780352-0064
Format: TEL
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780815/aaaaamsm.tel
Line Count: 150
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4616635a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1596432
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CODEL MONTGOMERY-MEETING WITH PHOUMI VONGVICHIT SUMMARY: PHOUMI DWELT AT GREATH LENGTH ON THE DAMAGE THAT HAD BEEN DONE TO LAOS DURING THE WAR. CHAI RMAN MON
TAGS: OREP, PEPR, MOPS, MILI, (MONTGOMERY, G V), (PHOUMI VONGVICHIT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4616635a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014